

Message Text

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73

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: LIBERALS SCORE TWO STUNNING BY-ELECTION
VICTORIES

REF: LONDON 8585

1. THE LIBERAL PARTY SCORED TWO STUNNING UPSET
VICTORIES IN YESTERDAY'S (JULY 26) BY-ELECTIONS AT
RIPON AND ISLE OF ELY (SEE REFTEL FOR BACKGROUND)
TAKING SEATS HELD BY THE CONSERVATIVES SINCE 1945 AND
UPPING THEIR OWN REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
FROM EIGHT TO TEN.

2. THE RESULTS AT RIPON, WITH FIGURES FOR THE 1970 GEN-
ERAL ELECTION GIVEN IN PARENTHESES, WERE AS FOLLOWS:

LIBERALS 13,902 - 43 PERCENT (4,583 - 13)

CONSERVATIVES 12,956 - 41 PERCENT (21,211 - 61)

LABOR 4,435 - 14 PERCENT (9,147 - 26)

INDEPENDENT 690 - 2 PERCENT (-----)

THE RESULTS AT ELY WERE:

LIBERALS 17,390 - 38 PERCENT (-----)

CONSERVATIVES 15,920 - 35 PERCENT (28,972 - 60)

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LABOR 12,153 - 27 PERCENT (19,366 - 40)

3. THIS DOUBLE VICTORY FOR THE LIBERALS IS A SHATTERING REBUFF TO BOTH MAJOR PARTIES, BUT ESPECIALLY TO THE GOVERNMENT. I REGARD IT AS THE CLEAREST INDICATOR YET OF POPULAR DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE, PARTICULARLY ITS INABILITY TO CONTROL INFLATION. AT THE SAME TIME, IT REVEALS THAT THE LABOR PARTY HAS MADE NO PROGRESS IN REGAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE ELECTORATE SINCE BEING TURNED OUT OF OFFICE IN 1970.

4. THE LIBERALS HAVE NO READILY IDENTIFIABLE POLICIES EXCLUSIVELY THEIR OWN, BUT THEY DO OFFER THE VOTERS A CHANCE TO REGISTER THEIR PROTESTS. EARLIER THIS YEAR, IT APPEARED THAT THE LIBERAL "REVIVAL" MIGHT BE RUNNING OUT OF STEAM, BUT IN THE WAKE OF ELY AND RIPON, BOTH MAJOR PARTIES WILL HAVE TO CONTEND WITH THE REALITY OF AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS THIRD FORCE IN BRITISH POLITICS.

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